428

Current
Policy No. 428

Freezing Chances for Peace

October 27, 1982

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
NOV 2 5 1982
U. S. GOVT. PUBS.
DEPOSITORY 376

Following is an address by James L. Buckley, Counselor of the Department of State, before the Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco, California, October 27, 1982.

I want to talk to you today about nuclear arms and the Administration's policy for reducing the risks of nuclear war. It is a subject replete with paradox. Nuclear war is too gruesome to contemplate or to ignore. The intricacies of the nuclear balance require great expertise to master; and yet we don't always trust the experts. No subject places so great demand on calm, rational thought; but few subjects so stir our emotions.

Let me begin with two simple but often overlooked truths: First, we all want peace. Yet in the intensity of the current debate over nuclear policy, it sounds at times as if some groups believe they hold a monopoly on the abhorrence of nuclear war. Let there be no such confusion here. We are all united in our desire to avoid a nuclear holocaust. President Reagan spoke for all Americans when he said, "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. So to those who protest against nuclear war, I can only say, I'm with you. . . . No one feels more than I the need for peace."

A second simple but often overlooked truth is that despite the outbreak of more than 100 military conflicts in the 37 years that have elapsed since World War II, the general peace has been preserved.

The policy that has maintained the general peace for so long is known as deterrence. It is not a Democratic or Republican policy; it has been American policy in every administration since the Second World War. The basic premise of deterrence is simple: No matter how strong our enemies become, or how successful a surprise attack they may launch, enough of our nuclear forces must survive to inflict such terrible losses that no one could ever benefit from attacking us.

Deterrence—the prevention of war by making the cost of aggression unacceptably high—is the only strategy that makes sense in the nuclear age. But while its premise is simple enough, it is not always so easy to determine whether we are, in fact, strong enough to successfully deter any attack. Because enough of our forces must survive an attack to inflict unacceptable costs on our enemies, the sufficiency of our strength depends in part on how strong our adversaries become; and, because the stakes are so great, there must never be any room for doubt.

Unfortunately, over the last decade the strength of our deterrent has steadily eroded. The balance that has kept the peace for over 35 years is today endangered.

The Soviet Challenge

Our current danger—mankind's current danger—stems from two long-term trends: one well known, one more obscure. It is well known that over the last 20 years the Soviets have engaged

READEX FICHE best copy available

S 1.71/4:

in the greatest arms buildup the world has ever seen. It is less frequently appreciated that during most of this period the United States chose not to keep pace. As the Soviets raced forward, we sat on our hands. As a result, while over three-quarters of Soviet strategic forces were built within the last 5 years, over three-quarters of ours are 15 years old or older.

- Since 1972, the Soviets have developed and deployed three new types of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)—the SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19—capable of a first strike. The most destructive of these weapons carries up to three times the number of warheads as our most powerful missile. All of them pose a major threat to our land-based ICBMs. Yet, it will be 4 years before we begin deployment of the MX, our first new U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile in 16 years.

- Since 1972, the U.S.S.R. has added over 60 missile-firing submarines in four new or improved classes. The commissioning of the first U.S. Trident submarine earlier this year marked the end of a 15-year period during which the United States did not build a single new ballistic-missile submarine.

- Since 1975, the Soviets have produced more than 250 modern bombers and are continuing to build them at a rate of more than 2 a month. By contrast, the newest U.S. heavy bomber was built more than 20 years ago. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union has built a massive air defense system, while the United States has no effective defense against Soviet bombers.

As a result of their massive buildup, the Soviets now surpass the United States in most significant measures used to judge nuclear weapons, including total number of systems, total number of ballistic missiles, and total destructive potential. For example, the Soviets possess 40% more delivery systems than we and surpass us in missile throw-weight, an important measure of their nuclear punch, by a factor of over 2½ to 1. Their most advanced weapons have the capacity to destroy our land-based missiles and command, control, and communications systems, while their own hardened installations remain relatively immune to U.S. counterattack.

Because for the first 25 years of the nuclear era America had the mightiest arsenal in the world, it is tempting to disbelieve the awesome change the last decade has witnessed. It is tempting to assume our technical advantages counterbalance Soviet advances. It is tempting to disbelieve claims that our land-based missiles and bombers are increasingly vulnerable to Soviet attack. Yet these are facts accepted even by groups that oppose this Administration's policies.

The massive Soviet buildup in strategic forces, coupled with a similar buildup in their conventional forces, is significant in two major ways. First, to the degree that it diminishes the credibility of our deterrent, it increases the danger that the Soviets may see force as an attractive option. But just as importantly, the Soviet increases allow them to exercise leverage over countries which once felt secure because of the assumed reliability of the American nuclear umbrella.

Thus the prices we pay for ignoring a 20-year surge in Soviet strength are these: The nuclear balance has shifted greatly; our forces are less secure; and Soviet influence in the world has grown. These are facts undisputed by serious analysts. Where opinions—and policies—differ is in our assessment of what we must do about these facts.

The Response

President Reagan's response to the challenge of the Soviet buildup has been twofold. One track of that response has been a vigorous commitment to reducing strategic arms; the other, to launching an overdue modernization of our strategic forces to protect and strengthen our ability to deter attack.

In a bold stroke to open the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) in Geneva, the President proposed, as an initial step, a one-third reduction in strategic missile warheads together with reductions in the numbers of missiles per side to almost half the current U.S. levels, such reductions to be verifiable.

I emphasize verification because it is essential to the goal of long-term stability. Trust, even in the best of situations, is not an adequate safeguard where the safety of the world is concerned.

But the critical reason why we cannot rely on trust is that the Soviets so constantly prove themselves unworthy of trust. We have conclusive proof that the Soviets are currently violating international arms control agreements by using chemical weapons in Afghanistan and supplying biochemical weapons for use in Southeast Asia. Ask an Afghan if Soviet agreements on arms control can be trusted.

In March, the Soviets announced a temporary unilateral ban on further deployment of intermediate-range missiles—a not so grand gesture considering that the Soviets have raced to an advantage of over 600 missiles to none. Even so, we have conclusive evidence that the Soviets promptly violated even this announcement.

In other areas the Soviets have proven themselves no less unreliable. Soviet violation of the Helsinki accords are only the most visible recent instances of Soviet disregard for international accords.

The U.S. START proposal points the way to a more stable strategic balance at equal and reduced levels of strategic forces. Its terms would be verifiable and fair and its limits in the mutual interest of both East and West. If the Soviets are indeed serious about seeking substantial reduction in forces, there is much that they can work with here.

Moreover, an agreement along the lines of the U.S. proposal would be an historic first. No arms control agreement to date—not SALT I [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks], not SALT II—has ever led to such fundamental cutbacks in existing strategic forces. An agreement such as that envisaged by the START proposals would be the first. Despite the necessarily cautious pace of the initial START negotiations, they offer the prospect for dramatic and fundamental progress.

But, as sensible as the U.S. arms proposals are, there will be little progress in the negotiations unless the Soviets are convinced that the United States has the will to restore and then maintain the nuclear balance. What is essential to remember, however, is that in the past, the Soviets have made concessions in arms control negotiations only when the United States threatened to redress imbalances.

- The Soviets agreed to negotiate an antiballistic missile (ABM) treaty only when the U.S. Senate approved an ABM system.

- Having unilaterally introduced new and revolutionary intermediate-range nuclear weapons into the European nuclear balance, the Soviets agreed to negotiate limits on such missiles only when it was made clear that NATO would deploy similar missiles.

- In 1977 the Soviets rejected out-of-hand U.S. proposals for deep reductions in nuclear forces. Only now, after the United States had shown its determination to modernize its forces, have the Soviets begun to take arms reductions seriously.

The President's proposal to modernize our forces in response to the massive Soviet buildup will maintain the effectiveness of our deterrent in years to

come. Only the production of the MX—our first new type of intercontinental missile in 16 years—and the proposed Trident II-launched D-5 missile will give us survivable forces capable of destroying hardened military targets. Only the Tridents—our first new nuclear submarines in 15 years—will insure the continued viability of our sea-based forces. Only the B-1 and Stealth bombers—our first new models in over 20 years—will protect our ability to penetrate Soviet air space into the future. Only with these new forces can we revitalize the balance that has maintained the peace for three decades.

Thus do the two tracks of President Reagan's response to the massive Soviet arms buildup reinforce one another. The President's commitment to modernize and strengthen U.S. nuclear forces is essential to the preservation of deterrence. At the same time, that commitment greatly enhances our prospects for achieving Soviet agreement to major reductions in our respective nuclear inventories.

Yet these twin objectives, which all Americans share, would be placed in jeopardy by a nuclear freeze of the kind now being urged as an alternative to the Administration's policies. Freeze proponents argue that it is safe for both the United States and the Soviets to "stop where they are," freeze all testing, production, and deployment of missiles and then proceed to negotiate reductions. While there are many versions of freeze proposals, all are based on three assumptions:

- First, they assume that the credibility of our deterrent would not be endangered by a freeze;
- Second, they assume that the Soviets are eager to reduce the level of their nuclear arms but have been prevented from making such reductions because of the arms race; and
- Third, they assume that changes in nuclear forces make the balance less stable and more destructive.

If any one of these assumptions were questionable, a nuclear freeze would prove not only unwise but dangerous. In fact, all three assumptions are not only questionable, they are wrong.

Credibility of U.S. Deterrent. The first assumption is that the credibility of our deterrent would not be endangered by a freeze. Freeze proponents acknowledge the Soviets' massive buildup over the last decade but argue that even sizeable inequalities are irrelevant given the vast destructive power at our disposal. If we simply total all of our missiles, this is probably true. But the key to deterrence is the ability of our forces to survive a surprise attack in sufficient numbers to inflict unacceptable losses on the Soviets and the plausible will to do so. Here, the picture becomes more murky.

For over three decades our strategy of deterrence has been based on a defensive triad of intercontinental missiles, bombers, and nuclear submarines. In the past, this triad has proven stable because a Soviet buildup or technological breakthrough that would defeat one element would still leave two able to carry out their missions. A freeze, however, would put the future of our triad in grave doubt.

Due to just such a technological breakthrough in missile accuracy in combination with the huge size of Soviet warheads, the first leg of our triad—intercontinental missiles—is already in jeopardy. The Soviets can today destroy as much as 90% of our ICBMs.

Deterrence—the prevention of war by making the cost of aggression unacceptably high—is the only strategy that makes sense in the nuclear age.

The second leg, bombers, may not fare much better. As I've noted, our intercontinental bombers are already over 20 years old and rapidly reaching the point where they must be retired. In addition, the Soviets have invested huge sums in erecting air defenses.

Fortunately, the third leg of our triad—our submarine fleet—still remains relatively safe. But, with the exception of our two new Trident submarines, our current fleet of missile-launching submarines was built in the mid-1960s and will need to be replaced. If the Soviets should achieve the breakthrough in antisubmarine warfare on which they are concentrating so great an effort, our nuclear deterrent would be fragile indeed.

Thus a freeze would leave us with one leg of our triad greatly vulnerable, one increasingly so, and our overall forces faced with dangerous deterioration. In short, we cannot assume that freezing current forces will be safe even into the near future.

Soviet Motivations. The second assumption critical to freeze proposals concerns Soviet motivations. The freeze assumes that only the arms race has forced the Soviets to build as many missiles as they have; therefore, once the arms race ends, the Soviets will be eager to reduce their forces. Unfortunately, Soviet deeds, as opposed to Soviet words, show that the freeze proponents are wrong in their assessment.

First, the Soviets' recent buildup is vastly greater than what would be needed either for a policy of deterrence or to "keep up" with American efforts. We voluntarily froze the number of our delivery systems in the mid-1960s. By 1972 the Soviets had achieved an equal number, except that theirs were substantially more powerful. Today, as a result of cutbacks in ours and increases in theirs, their delivery systems exceed ours by about 40%. They are not a reluctant party to the current arms race; they are its cause.

Second, the character of the Soviet arms buildup belies a passive role. The Soviets have concentrated on developing land-based missiles having a first-strike capability and, therefore, the type of missile most likely to intimidate. This is not the effort of a reluctant nation forced to build arms for defense but of a nation which seeks the political benefits of intimidating force.

Third, if the Soviets are only building arms to counter our buildup, then why did the Soviets introduce intermediate-range nuclear missiles into Europe? NATO has no intermediate-range missiles in Europe. Yet the Soviets have built 600 of them, most of which are now deployed and targeted against West European capitals. The Soviets did not reluctantly continue an arms race in Western Europe. They started one where there had been none. They did so to garner the benefits of intimidation.

The Soviets are not likely to relinquish the advantages they have worked so hard to achieve if we agree to a freeze. Far from speeding reductions, as a practical matter a freeze would preclude them.

Impact of Technological Improvements. The third assumption that underlies the freeze is that technological improvements will increase both the quantity and megatonnage of our nuclear forces, thus feeding visions of a reckless, runaway spiraling of destructive power. Thus advocates of the freeze would stop all further improvements in our weapons and delivery systems. But in the case of the United States, new technology has

actually resulted in a net decrease in the destructive power of our strategic forces. In the past 10 years, technological advances have allowed us to reduce our total megatonnage by almost 30% and by roughly 60% since the peak levels of the early 1960s; reductions, incidentally, a freeze 10 years ago would have made impossible.

Other advances that we contemplate would make weapons safer and less vulnerable to attack or to unauthorized or accidental use. The freeze movement, for example, would have us forego more survivable land-based missiles, the deployment of less vulnerable submarines, and other measures designed to insure their survival and hence the credibility of deterrence.

By condemning all technological advances, in short, the freeze movement throws out the baby with the bathwater.

Conclusion

In sum, a freeze only makes sense if it will preserve our security and quickly lead to significant reductions in arms. This assumes that our deterrent would not be endangered by the freeze, that the Soviets would be willing to reduce their forces, and that further improvements in weaponry would make the peace less stable. These assumptions are not only questionable but false—particularly as it would remove incentives for serious Soviet participation in arms reductions talks. As a result, a freeze would not only prove unwise, it could prove disastrous.

In 1934, England, paralyzed by the prospective horror of war, refused to maintain its defenses. Winston Churchill, then merely a Member of Parliament, warned his country of the danger posed by a growing Nazi Germany in these words:

> Everyone would be glad to see the burden of armaments reduced in every country. But history shows on many a page that armaments are not necessarily a cause of war and that the want of them is no guarantee of peace. . . . This truth may be unfashionable, unpalatable, unpopular. But it is the truth . . . the only choice open is the old grim choice our forebears had to face, namely, whether we shall submit to the will of a stronger nation or whether we shall prepare to defend our rights, our liberties and indeed our lives.

President Reagan's twin policies of force modernization and arms reduction will leave us a secure and stable deterrent at greatly reduced levels and will work to prevent war by accident. Deterrence is a proven, effective policy. It is our safest and wisest course. It is also our boldest. ■

Published by the United States Department of State • Bureau of Public Affairs
Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • November 1982
Editor: Colleen Sussman • This material is in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission; citation of this source is appreciated.

Bureau of Public Affairs
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Official Business

If address is incorrect
please indicate change.
Do not cover or destroy
this address label.

Postage and Fees Paid
Department of State
STA-501

Third Class Bulk Rate

U.S.MAIL